

John William Congdon

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst. in relation to the above matter. I am sorry to hear that you are unable to visit at present, but I am glad to hear that you are well. I am sure that you will be able to visit soon.

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MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

Rom.8:37 In all these things we are more than conquerors thru Him who loved us.

I have noticed that those who live on an animal plane, with no ideals to live up to, no great purpose in life to realize, just following the course of least resistance as prompted by their own inclinations and desires, get more sunshine and pleasure out of life than those do who live on a spiritual plane and consequently struggle and fight continually against the horde of influences that try to keep them down.

Animal humans are like ~~a~~ placid lakes resting at ease in ~~its~~ comfortable beds. No keen sense of right and wrong disturbs them, no conscience troubles them; they are what they are and where they are and don't have to become any different or lift themselves elsewhere.

But spiritual humans who are trying to live on a higher plane than the animal are like ~~an outflowing~~ the rapids of an on-rushing stream such as the Niagara River. Great boulders of obstacles and opposition stand in their way which must be overcome if they are to realize their goal in life.

This is why the Gospel of Christ does not bring us peace ~~by~~ but a sword. Christian living is a matter of struggle and battle. Christ Himself had to overcome the world into which He came and in His name we Xns are called upon to do the same. And all the precious promises of God are only for those who do overcome. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things". The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of Victory.

But this does not mean that the Gospel of X appeals only to the naturally strong and courageous. The amazing thing about the Gospel is that it appeals rather to the weak. The glory of the Gospel is that Christ makes strength out of weakness and heroes out of cowards. The Lord takes the foolish things of this world with which to confound the wise and the Lord causes the ungifted ones to become the heirs of the grace of God.

This Gospel of present Victory and future Triumph is not offered to any of us who think ourselves sufficiently strong, but to all of us who know ourselves to be weak.

At the outset, then, let us get the picture which our text presents. A far-flung battleline of opposing forces struggling for the mastery of our souls. Coming at us with weapons ready for action are battalions after battalion. Here is Tribulation, there Distress; Persecution, Famine and Want and Nakedness, Peril and Sword are all approaching together. This is Paul's list but it is not complete, it is merely suggestive. These are ^g but types of the many trials and temptations and sufferings against which the followers of Christ must fight in order to win their eternal victory.

Aye, but in all these things we are more than conquerors thru Him who loveth us.

More than conquerors! Such triumph! such exaltation! This is the ideal, but alas, how scarcely, if ever, we realize it. More often we are less than conquerors.

When we do win it is but by the skin of our teeth. The struggle leaves us exhausted and we have 'nt an ounce of strength to spare. Sometimes we are so weakened that we are ~~left~~ forced to surrender at the next onslaught.

And sometimes we win our battles by running away from them. Now, I am not decrying such meager victories. Better to win by the skin of our teeth than not to win at all; better to run away from evil than to surrender to it. Thank God for even our meager victories- and many of those in spite of Him who loved us.

Nevertheless the ideal for Xns is that of "more than conquerors". If ~~for~~ Christ were influencing us as He should we would indeed be more than conquerors.

"More than conquerors" means to conquer excessively, to have plenty of victory left over and to spare.

"We must succeed successfully"

Now if we are one with Christ we fight not alone with our own strength, but with His. "In all these things we are more than conquerors thru Him who loveth us."

As samples of such overwhelming victory there comes to mind three types which are worthy of our consideration.

I. First come victory by devastation.

In O.T. times victory measured in terms of complete

3. annihilation of the enemy and desolation of his land. History is full of such victories. So the Assyrians conquered their enemies. Saul lost his crown because he refused to conquer this way. Russia overcame Poland by devastating the country. It is the iron heel method.

This method of victory by devastation is a good type of victory in the spiritual life. In conquering some enemy in our life we often win by devastation. We crush and smother every instinct within us that would lead us into the zone of danger. We bravely cut off the hand that leads us astray and ~~the~~ ^{we} unhesitatingly pluck out the eye that entices us.

This is a clean-cut victory, but by the iron-heel method. Thank God for even such a victory which enables us to become more than conquerors, but is it after all the best?

II. There is a better method of gaining the victory.

There is a method of triumph which leads us so to treat our enemies as to turn them into our allies and helpers and friends.

When the great hordes from the North swooped down upon the Roman Empire and conquered it, they utilized Roman Law and adopted the Xn religion, they took to themselves their enemies until they became one and out of that conquering there has emerged modern civilization.

When the Normans conquered the Saxons they treated their enemies so kindly and lived with them until they blended together, bringing forth a race of people far superior to the original.

~~Paul~~ By this method of conquering the same instincts and energies which once led us to do evil can be harnessed and used to do good. Evil is largely but misdirected energy.

Take the example of Paul- his former hot-headness and passionate persecution. Paul conquered them and consecrated them to gain that wonderfully excessive victory of His in Jesus Christ when he became the greatest apostle to the Gentiles.

And Peter likewise so overcame his weaknesses as to use them in his great life-service to Christ.

Conquest by devastation is great, often sublime, but surely it is far more triumphant to gain the victory by converting our enemy into an ally, by making the very force that once led us astray serve the higher purposes of our souls.

III. But we have not yet considered the highest form of excessive victory. Some men attain it partially, but only one man ever used it fully. No one except Jesus has ever used it in conquering all things. But nevertheless, it is our ideal way and we should constantly strive to realize it.

He who gains his victories without fighting, without striking a single blow becomes most of all more than a conqueror.

The perfect conqueror is he who never needs to fight at all.

For example, the prowess of Napoleon was so great that on one occasion he conquered a whole country just by riding thru it. He did not have to engage in a single battle. This is the strongest proof of Napoleon's real greatness.

Now thru Him that loved us there may come to our souls a similar victory. If we have the strength of the Lord in us, we may conquer so excessively that we, too, in the meeting of our enemies need not strike a single blow.

There are many men and women, i.e., to whom the temptation to drink or to gluttonous excess makes no appeal. In them is no craving, no agonizing struggle. They conquer without fighting because they have at their command infinite resources from which the temptation fades away in advance. They live on a plane of soul where suggestion to evil wields no power or seduction.

There are men so honest that should they be left with piles of gold not theirs and with the positive assurance that they could never be caught who would not even be tempted by suggestion to steal a penny of it.

May I ask, is this only an ideal? Beyond any human attainment? If it were, it would not be worth preaching, least of all to weak and broken men and women such as you and I are.

I believe with all my heart that by daily faithfulness and union with Christ we can more and more learn to conquer without striking a blow. The perfect way to conquer evil is to have the heart so set on good and so actively pledged to Jesus Christ that temptations cease to have their attractiveness, yea they become repulsive!

"I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."